

Moving Forward

January edition of The Joyful Noise

It isn't easy to say farewell to Denise Fried who guided our Christian Education program and more for six years, or Gloria Van Houten who danced and preached her way among us for a year. But that is what the turn of the calendar brings as we enter 2017.

Because of family health concerns, Denise will devote more time to her home life. Gloria, meanwhile, is taking a call to serve as pastor of a church in Schofield, WI (near Wausau).

What do these changes mean for our future? Session, led by the Personnel Committee, pondered that question and came up with an exciting option. Rather than seeking two part-time replacements for the current positions, the Session is proposing that we search for a fulltime Co-Pastor to work with Jim Rand until his retirement and then beyond.

This is an unusual step, but logical and forward-thinking. It is unlikely that we would find an associate pastor before next fall or early winter, and less likely that a top candidate would accept our call with Pastor Rand's retirement looming in the foreseeable future. We'd probably have to settle for a second-best candidate.

Creating a Co-Pastor position, offers these benefits:

- 1) It creates a succession plan, as is often used in business. The church won't be left in limbo for a year or more, treading water or falling behind while focused on a pastoral search. Instead, we will continue to meet the goals and priorities that you identified in our recent congregational survey.
- 2) We would be able to choose from the very best pool of candidates – those prepared to lead a vital church, and excited by the chance to do so in the Presbytery of Milwaukee, with its national reputation for excellence.
- 3) The new co-pastor will have time to meet and fall in love with the congregation, its programs and personality, while bringing new leadership gifts as Jim Rand continues to serve side-by-side with the new person during the transition.
- 4) Pastor Rand and the Co-Pastor will share leadership equally for worship, Christian Ed, administration, pastoral care, and other duties, based on the talents and gifts each pastor brings to the office.
- 5) The church will maintain flexibility for future staffing.

What are the "costs" of this plan? In the short run, we will need more hands-on help from members and others. A team of church members is in place already to carry on the duties that Denise ably

provided. The extra workload on our current pastor will be offset by inviting guest preachers on occasion, and by utilizing our members' gifts of ministry to provide care for one another.

Session has discussed financial plans, too, to do this successfully. We actually might realize a small cost saving in 2017, with one or two fewer salaries to pay. And, by combining two part time positions, we will have most of the money we need when the co-pastor comes on board. Because we have a good endowment, and because that endowment was given to enable ministry, we may eventually approve a short-term plan (3-5 years) to spend a small portion of the endowment to help us through the transition.

Is this a done deal? Not at all! In coming weeks we will invite the congregation's questions, ideas and feedback. The Presbytery of Milwaukee must agree to our plan, **and the new ministry title must be voted on and approved by this congregation. We plan to have that vote at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 29. That meeting will include lunch and will begin in Fellowship Hall after the 10:30 worship service.**

If the motion passes, we will also elect a Co-Pastor Nominating Committee (CPNC) at that meeting. This committee will reflect the membership of the congregation, and will need to show dedication to the task and agility to complete their work in a timely fashion. The previous Pastor Nominating Committee met almost every week for nine or ten months. Anyone interested in serving on the CPNC should speak to Paul Bargren (chair of Personnel) or Pastor Rand.

Whether or not you are on that committee, we hope you will show up often, get involved where you can, and stay tuned to what is happening. These are good times for WPC. We are moving ahead, faithful to Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit!